

DR. BLUNDELL'S

Second Letter

ON

HIS RETIREMENT FROM THE MEDICAL SCHOOL
OF GUY'S HOSPITAL.

ADDRESSED TO HIS MEDICAL FRIENDS.

LONDON :

JOHN CHURCHILL, 16, PRINCES-STREET, SOHO.

AND ALL BOOKSELLERS.

1834.

London : Printed by Mills, Jowett, and Mills,
Bolt-court, Fleet-street.

SECOND LETTER,

ETC. ETC.

GENTLEMEN,

MY attention having been drawn to some statements which have been lately put forth in consequence of, though certainly not in answer to, my former letter, under the advice of friends, I feel called upon, for reasons which must be apparent, to point out *seriatim* some of the inaccuracies which those statements appear to me to contain.

First.—*It is not true*, that in 1829-30, the gentleman who appears as the author of those statements, and who for the present, at all events, may be treated as such, gave clinical instructions to the pupils on account of Dr. Blundell;* on the con-

* Annexed to my obstetric class was an institution which delivered about three hundred women annually, and the gentleman, the writer of the letter, by his own wish, was appointed to be called occasionally to the few difficult cases which occurred in

trary, it is remarkable that this very session I expressly engaged an able friend, Mr. Doubleday, solely to undertake this important duty, which he did with vigour and effect : and further, about this very time, the author of the letter alluded to was disqualified for so confidential an office, being engaged in giving assistance to the rival class in Webb-street.

Secondly.—*It is not true*, as is insinuated, that Dr. Blundell requested of the Hospital that the writer of the letter might be appointed his obstetric assistant, or, indeed, that Dr. B. sought an

his neighbourhood ; these cases of difficulty were necessarily rare, for the field of the institution lay principally on the other side of the river, and was divided among five other gentlemen, who kindly and zealously volunteered similar assistance. I presume the claim is not raised on so frivolous a ground as this. A clinical instructor is not a gentleman who goes merely to some half dozen cases in the course of a session, where there is a class consisting of a hundred and twenty, thirty, or more pupils. What may have been done unknown to me I cannot pretend to say, but further help I do not acknowledge. The printed paper of the institution is now lying before me, and contains, along with that of the writer of the letter, the names of Messrs. Clarke, Croft, Doubleday, Fowler, and Taylor, as consulting-surgeon accoucheurs, to every one of whom singly I am under equal obligation, nor ought I to forget Mr. Ward.

obstetric assistant at all. On the contrary, the Hospital, unasked, first inquired of me whether I should object to such an appointment, and though I did not seek or altogether approve of it, I acquiesced. Every one who understands hospital intrigues will see the wide distinction.

Thirdly.—*It is not true*, as is asserted in the letter, that Dr. Blundell solicited the author to take upon himself the charge of the obstetric out-door patients. On the contrary, when the assistant was appointed, I was told by Mr. Harrison unasked, and in a clear voice, “these patients the assistant *must* attend:” *must* was the word: if this be denied, I reiterate the assertion in a more emphatic tone, “So Mr. Harrison did say.” It is clear, therefore, notwithstanding any words of acquiescence which may have passed, that solicitation on my part was quite out of the question.

Fourthly.—*It is not true*, as insinuated, that during the two first of the three sessions throughout which the clinical establishment had subsisted,

the main burden of the wards fell, at Dr. Blundell's solicitation, upon the writer of the letter.— On the contrary, with a few occasional interruptions, these wards were regularly attended by myself; my services in that department, from first to last, being completely gratuitous, the new arrangements having occasioned no increase in my obstetric class.

Fifthly.—*It is not true*, that during the first two years of the clinical establishment, the delivery of the clinical lectures was, by Dr. Blundell's solicitation, committed to the writer of the letter.— During these two sessions the lectures, agreeably to an arrangement made with the treasurer, were given by myself; and in consequence of this arrangement, according to the best information that I can procure, the writer did not lecture at all till the close of the second, out of three sessions, namely, April 1833; the session terminating very soon afterwards, namely, in the middle of May, and even then he lectured unsolicited, and without my being informed of it till some time afterwards.

Sixthly.—*It is not true*, as strongly implied, that Dr. Blundell's spring course of midwifery consists of a scanty succession of forty-three lectures.—The number, including female diseases, and which diseases were comprised in the course referred to by the writer, is sixty and upwards. If, therefore, one is compelled to make an estimate of the assistance afforded, it is clear that this assistance was very imperfect, much more imperfect than the tone and style of the writer would lead one to suppose.*

Seventhly.—*It is not true*, as boldly asserted in that letter, that when confined by indisposition,

* Should it be urged that there was not time for a fuller course, that is not correct. I used, in these emergencies, to lecture twice in the day. Should it be said that this could not be done, then, it may be replied, the daily lecture ought to have commenced at half-past seven, instead of eight in the morning, and have continued an hour and a half. The regulations of the Hall cannot be objected, as allowance was always made for a *bona-fide* course, interrupted by human infirmity, and established long before the regulations existed; and it was clearly more in the spirit of the rules, that the lectures should be given in this manner, than that they should be omitted altogether. In stating all this, however, it is but just to add that great indulgence ought to be shown to a first attempt. But here it is to be recollected, that we are not estimating the lecturer, but merely the value of the service rendered.

Dr. Blundell solicited the writer to take the chair.—On the contrary, the annexed will show, that it was from Mr. Harrison and the author of the letter that the solicitation came, if any there was. Dr. Blundell was asked, Dr. Blundell acquiesced; a suggestion was called for, a suggestion was given, though not followed.*

Eighthly.—*It is not true*, as might be supposed, that the pupils must have been disappointed and faith

* “ Friday Evening.

“ My dear Sir,—I am glad to hear so improved an account of your health, and I trust it will not be long ere you are quite well again.

“ The treasurer has to-day communicated to me his wish that the midwifery lectures should not be suspended, and requested that I should propose to you my continuing them from the point at which you left off, till the re-establishment of your strength. This I shall be happy to do, and shall be still further obliged by your suggestions, if it meets your approval. I am, my dear Sir, very truly yours,

“ &c. &c. &c.

“ To James Blundell, Esq., M.D.”

“ No. 1, Great George-st., Westminster,
Sunday, April 6th, 1834.

“ Dear Sir,—The subject which I wish you to take up in the obstetric course is, the unimpregnated genitals and their diseases; this section of the course I was upon the point of entering, when

have been broken, if the course had not been continued by the writer of the letter.—In an emergency arising from ill-health, I am persuaded that the lecturers who fill the other two chairs in the neighbourhood would willingly and readily have assisted; and, really, had I not been unwilling to blight the hopes of a gentleman, pressing, indeed, not to say obtrusive, but still not without good qualities, if left to my own free choice, by the use of a very moderate degree of foresight I might have been provided with unexceptionable and preferable assistance, the assistance of a gentleman who is said to have stood first at a great public school, who had received a first-rate Oxford education, and who, of course, possessed all those high feelings which such advantages never fail to ensure to ingenuous minds.

laid upon a sick-bed, and the ward above stairs in the hospital will enable you to come to the consideration of these diseases with advantage.

“ I am, with thanks for your kind inquiries, my dear Sir, yours faithfully,

“ &c. &c. &c.”

“ &c. &c. &c.”

Ninthly.—*It is not true* that the writer was introduced to the treasurer by Dr. Blundell.—Notwithstanding the electrifying assertion to the contrary, such introduction has never been given by me from first to last.

Tenthly.—*It is not true*, again, that the writer of that letter was introduced to the obstetric chair in the same manner as Dr. Blundell was.—On the contrary, in the fullest, largest, and most unequivocal manner I was directed by my predecessor to deliver the obstetric lectures; the writer was not. Further, by my own wish and desire, I gave a full equivalent for the lectures, by delivering first, parts of courses, then whole courses, of which there were six annually, and that for several years together; the writer did not. On the contrary, *not till the end of the last session, and then by his own desire, having asked and received a suggestion, did he lecture in the midwifery course at all*, and even then he gave only a scanty course of forty-three lectures instead of sixty, of which that course was composed when complete.

Eleventhly.—On reviewing the above statement it will, I presume, be unnecessary to add that the startling assertion of “having been *solicited* to do ALL this by Dr. Blundell himself,” is, in the main and force of it, *utterly untrue*, and this charge lies most clearly against the first, second, third, fourth, and fifth propositions, the whole together forming a kind of electric battery of no mean power. In the general, throughout, the real truth has been, Dr. Blundell was solicited, and Dr. Blundell acquiesced.

Twelfthly.—*It is not true*, nay, it is utterly untrue, that Dr. Blundell could not brook the conjunction of the name of the writer with his own.—Undoubtedly the name was not at first my free choice, but this was not the matter,—that which I would not brook—that which called down upon Mr. Harrison deserved chastisement—was the impertinent, not to say insolent, liberty taken with my name, under all the aggravated circumstances stated in that letter; an impertinence which it was impossible for a gentleman to overlook.

Thirteenthly.—*It is not true*, as seems to be unworthily and ungenerously insinuated in the letter, that Dr. Blundell promptly removed his museum in order to distress the school.—Not to mention that, on the occasion of this rupture, I showed a disposition to leave the museum for a time on equitable terms, several years ago I intimated to Mr. Harrison that the Hospital would do well to collect for itself, and it is in consequence of this that the school is prepared for the change. My real motive for removing the museum was to use it in my own professional studies, and to prevent any shuffling claim being raised by the manager about the right of property; for it is scarcely necessary to state that, after the affair of the advertisement, I had necessarily lost all confidence whatever in the straight-forward dealing of that individual.

Fourteenthly.—*It is not true*, as the tone of that letter would seem to convey, that Dr. Blundell has been the intentional author of any injury to the writer.—On the contrary, in firmly and sharply

rebuking and withstanding Mr. Harrison, I have, from first to last, purposely avoided any crimination of the writer of the letter ; and indeed throughout, though all may not have been done which was wished, yet it must be apparent to the world, that actively, or by acquiescence, I have been a main and, on the whole, surely, not ungenerous, instrument of the writer's advancement,—a benefactor, and not an opponent. To perceive this, let it be recollected where the writer was originally, where he now is, and how he came there.

One or two general remarks, and I have done on these points. Throughout a great portion of the letter there seems to be an attempt made to raise a claim to the *obstetric* chair, for exertions made in the *clinical* department. It may be right, therefore, to state distinctly, that the *clinical* was essentially separated from the *obstetric* chair, in this most important point,—the *clinical* chair was *Hospital* property, and the *obstetric* chair was *private* property; so that, in strict right, the one could not give a claim to the other.

Again, there seems further to be a tendency in the letter to represent the clinical assistance as greater than it really was. For, as shown above, instead of commencing in 1829-30 as stated, it did not exist at all till the session of 1831-2. Instead of clinical lectures having been given by the writer of the letter, during two or three sessions, they were delivered by him during the third session only, with the exception of a few delivered in the close of the second session, say in the end of April and the beginning of May. Instead of the out-door patients being seen in the Hospital with a *primary* view to my relief, they were in reality so seen by the direction of Mr. Harrison, who had the right to decide, and who had pronounced his "must;" the primary object throughout being not to relieve me, but, for whatever purpose, to introduce another gentleman. Instead of the Hospital Lying-in Charity and its management by the writer of that letter being to me a benefit, or creating claims upon me, in reality it was just the converse, for, as intimated in my former letter, I had an institution of my own, necessary to my independence as a

lecturer, and with which that Hospital institution was evidently intended to compete.

But to proceed : with that letter I have dealt the more freely, because I have a shrewd suspicion, that it may, after all, be the work of my very good friend at the Hospital ; for, as most undoubtedly my name was borrowed for the spurious advertisement so as to impose upon the pupils, the name appearing not only within the bounds of the Hospital, but in the public papers, why should not a similar liberty be taken with the name of my successor ? That this conjectural emendation is not ill-founded is rendered probable, I think, by several additional considerations. And first, the whole letter seems, in its facts and tenor, to be the work of an individual at most but partially acquainted with the truth ; some of the statements, too, being so directly erroneous, that they cannot be supposed to have emanated from the pen of the reputed writer, who must have been better informed. Further, the writer speaks of the pleasure of being introduced to the treasurer, an expression which

may be easily forgiven to that individual when speaking of himself, but which, unless indeed it be merely complimentary, can scarcely come with propriety from any other gentleman, when it is considered under what untoward and unanswered charges Mr. Harrison now lies.

Further, the whole letter bears a resemblance to others which I have received from that gentleman, inasmuch as, if apology for him be its purpose, it leaves "the point at issue completely untouched." Then, too, in the letter, the writer, to screen the treasurer, is placed in a light which he really does not merit; for is he not introduced as coming before the public and saying, "When I was young, and of small repute, this Dr. Blundell, neglecting others, stretched out his hand to me, and by his countenance laid the first foundation of my advancement? When some years afterwards an opportunity offered, he overlooked the abrupt manner in which I had broken from inchoate engagements, introduced me to the office of obstetric assistant at Guy's, and left me a fair field for distinguishing

myself to the best of my ability ; abstaining from ungenerously or illiberally intercepting my endeavours, or attempting, in any manner, to raise obstacles in my way. Such was his procedure towards me, notwithstanding the obvious purpose of the good man at the head of affairs ; and thus it was that I was allowed to come to the very foot of the chair, where, in an evil moment, ‘ *nemo omnibus horis . . .*,’ the object of my desire being within reach of my grasp, I turned round upon my benefactor, and availed myself of an opportunity which the treasurer threw in my way, to join with him to occupy the post of honour and emolument, without the poor remuneration of thanks. “ That Dr. Blundell has been of service to me up to the moment of his chastisement of the treasurer, I myself, before the public, do freely acknowledge ; and even now, should he abstain from censuring this letter, the only apparent failure of his undeviating kindness to me will have been, his refusing to sit in the chair after the indignity with which, by the impertinent abuse of his name, Mr. Harrison has soiled it. Even the museum was not taken

away without such intimations having been previously given to the Hospital years before, that they were ‘richly provided’ with one in its place; and the issue of the whole—the issue of which I have to complain, has been to give me every thing to which I was aspiring—my cup runs over. His enmity is, I must confess, as the event shows, as beneficial as the friendship of some:”—but who could hear of such a naïve declaration without be-
 thinking themselves of the celebrated apologue of times gone by?

Again, that the apparent author is not really the writer of the letter is rendered still more probable by an attempt studiously made, with equal injustice to both of us, to transfer certain well-merited expressions of reprehension and rebuke from Mr. Harrison to the reputed writer himself. To those who have done me the honour to read, even with slight attention, my former letter, it can scarcely be necessary to remark, that, unless it be intended as a cheerful and enlivening jest, to suppose that the description of the chair, “redolent and reeking

as it was with the indignity which stained it," has any personal reference to my intended colleague, is, to say the least of it, a strange misapprehension. To remove, however, at once, all future doubt on this matter, I beg leave to explain distinctly, once for all—that to this gentleman personally, this expression has no reference whatever, and that he undervalues himself to think so for a moment. No : the grave indignity which has been very properly, I conceive, rebuked and chastised—the grave indignity which I neither could, nor would, nor ought to brook—the grave indignity from the responsibility of which I will not suffer my good friend at the Hospital, under this feint, to steal away—that grave indignity was, on the part of the Hospital, the insolent trifling with my name—the name of a man standing independently, and, in relation to the managers, claiming to be every way their equal in the levels of society—the inserting it in a spurious advertisement, the daring to set forth that advertisement as mine ;—the actual appearance of my name (the public will scarcely believe it) in the daily papers, without my leave, contrary to my

wishes, *after the mockery of consulting me about the matter* ; this, too, when I was abroad,—when no arrangements whatever had been made with my proposed colleague—when, for aught I know to the contrary, a disputed claim to my museum and a suit in equity might have been the result ; and all this without having one word to say in direct defence of what was done, though publicly charged with it three or four weeks ago. The thing is so monstrous in any persons of station in society, that, I repeat it, the public will probably find a difficulty in believing it. What ! are the medical officers who ought to take the lead at the hospitals—men who, in fact, are the very brains of the institution, are they, at length, reduced to such a pitch of degradation, that even an independent man, who is no officer, except by courtesy, and over whom the Hospital has, of right, no authority whatever, cannot go and lecture within its walls, without being considered as so tamed and degraded, that he may be safely subjected to such treatment as this ? And will the profession in general betray their own cause, and publicly or privately palliate such conduct, dero-

gatory, not merely to one individual, for he is of small importance, but to the whole body? If there is any approach to such a condition, it is surely high time, that those who feel at liberty should turn round, and resist, at whatever sacrifice; for I hold it to be of the utmost importance to society at large that the self-respect of the profession should not be totally frittered away. True, we are the public servants of the community, but we are not yet Helots.*

* The following recent Circular will show what Hospital managers are capable of attempting:—

“ 46, Lincoln’s-inn-fields, Aug. 22, 1834.

“ SIR,

“ The Committee of St. Thomas’s Hospital propose to offer, on Thursday next, August the 28th, for your consideration and approval, their report on the Medical and Surgical School. Of that report, I beg to draw your attention to the concluding paragraph, which states—‘ that they consider it quite inconsistent with the duty of any medical officer of this establishment to give his support and assistance to any other Medical School; and they consider that such officer having so engaged himself, should be called upon to resign any situation he may hold in this establishment.’ And I now venture to claim your attention, in order to prevent your becoming inadvertently a party to the commission of a moral wrong, either by your approval or permission of the enactment of a law founded on this statement.

“ The individual who now takes the liberty of addressing you, is the only one who, in consequence of holding the appointment of Professor of Surgery at King’s College, can be affected by the proposed measure. I have lectured since October 1831 at that

Once more. That the apparent author is not the writer of that letter, is, I submit, further rendered probable, by the following minute yet curious circumstance. For the treasurer, my very good friend at the Hospital, to commit an error in Latin prosody, considering the mode in which he treats gentlemen of education, would not be unaccount-

Institution; no law exists that prohibits my so doing. I had previously made no secret of my intentions; and my successive resignations of the offices of Lecturer on Anatomy and of Lecturer on Surgery, at St. Thomas's Hospital, had been accepted.

"I need scarcely observe to you, then, that the regulation, the necessity for which is now first contemplated by the Committee, is designed at once to constitute and punish, as an offence, that which has been done during a period of three years, with the well-founded assurance of its being strictly conformable to the laws of the Hospital;—it leaves me even no alternative of avoiding the punishment it aims at inflicting, by the resignation of the appointment at King's College, supposed to be inconsistent with my duty as surgeon of the Hospital;—it insists upon a blank sentence of dismissal.

"Abstaining from all further comment, I leave it with perfect confidence to your decision, whether the Committee shall be permitted to initiate a law which is the mere pretext for my expulsion from an office, which I have held for more than fourteen years, with the approbation of the Governors, and with the duties of which my appointment at King's College has never interfered. I am, Sir, with the utmost respect,

"JOSEPH HENRY GREEN."

Of this committee, it is remarkable that my very good friend, the treasurer of Guy's Hospital, is himself a perpetual member.

able ; but that the apparent writer of the letter, who has taken his medical degree, and of course studied at an University, should not be able to quote or scan a Latin hexameter, is incredible. Indeed, considering that we are told by Cicero that a Roman actor would have been hissed from the stage for such a shock given to elegant ears, I cannot help maliciously surmising, that my very good friend at the head of affairs, if, indeed, he be (as I have suggested) the real author of the letter, must himself have been aware of the dissonance, and that he has artfully put this uncouth line into my mouth, in order that, instead of my exit being closed with the "*plaudite*" of antiquity, I might terminate my career with a metrical blunder, amid a chorus of laughter from the graduates with whom I have been associated.

Equester ordo stultum errorem intelligit,
Magnoque risu canticum repeti jubet.

And now, to bring this letter, already I fear too

After reading this letter, I would distinctly ask my friends and the public,—Is this, or is this not, an attempt to exercise a most abominable tyranny? Is it, or is it not, time that a stand should be made?—J. B.

long, to a conclusion, however I may regret for his own sake, that a respectable gentleman, with whom my quarrel was not, should have been induced, by any influence, to affix his name to so inaccurate a letter, the tendency of which is plainly to palliate and cover a most unworthy transaction, I part from him with no wish but what his best friends might approve ; and, anxious to return to more congenial pursuits, which but ill bear such interruptions, I shall not be easily induced, unless indeed my friends think it necessary, to take notice of anything which does not proceed from Mr. Harrison himself, the gentleman against whom, and whom alone, my charges were originally laid.

I have the honour to be,

Gentlemen,

Your faithful servant,

JAMES BLUNDELL.

1, Great George Street, Westminster,

29th October 1834.